

**Address by**  
**H.E. Tan Sri Datuk Seri Utama Pandikar Amin bin Haji Mulia**  
**Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia**  
**at the Official Opening of the First AIPA Caucus,**  
**Kuala Lumpur, 26 – 28 April 2009**

Honourable Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure and honour for me to be the first to address the First Meeting of the Caucus of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). It is also truly a great honour to the Parliament of Malaysia to be chosen to be the host of this First AIPA Caucus. To all the distinguished delegates from AIPA Member Countries and Special Observer Countries, I bid you a warm welcome to the Parliament of Malaysia, the venue for this inaugural gathering of the AIPA Caucus.

It would be recalled that the 28<sup>th</sup> AIPA General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur in August 2007 adopted a proposal by the Parliament of Malaysia for the establishment of this AIPA Caucus. Subsequently in August the following year, the 29<sup>th</sup> AIPA General Assembly in Singapore accorded Malaysia with the honour to host the first meeting.

Honourable Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ASEAN moves steadily forward in its process of integration into an ASEAN Community by 2015, AIPA parliamentarians became more aware of the urgent need to establish an AIPA Caucus as a mechanism to develop common legislative initiatives with the objective of the harmonization of the laws of ASEAN countries. The harmonization of our laws would promote better cooperation and coordination of their enforcement in the envisaged ASEAN community, and hopefully also pave the way for the promulgation of common laws in the future.

The AIPA Caucus would also provide a platform for regular interaction amongst AIPA Member Countries as well as Special Observers, and also between AIPA and ASEAN. It is also mandated to monitor the implementation of AIPA Resolutions especially in ensuring that the recommendations of AIPA Resolutions on further enhancing regional cooperation are conveyed to the governments of ASEAN countries for their consideration.

On the harmonization of laws, two laws on combating the scourge of the drug menace and human trafficking have been selected as a start. Other laws especially those pertaining to trans-border crimes would be added at future Caucus meetings. Admittedly this harmonization exercise is not a simple task, and it might take several AIPA Caucus meetings before the areas of the laws to be harmonized could be firmed up and be presented for the consideration of ASEAN. Nonetheless, I am confident that at this initial phase of its deliberations, the AIPA Caucus would be able to find consensus on the guidelines and be successful in identifying the areas of the two selected laws that can be harmonized to facilitate regional cooperation in their enforcement.

With the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter last December, ASEAN has become a legal entity that will transform into a more rules-based and people-centered organization, and eventually evolve into an ASEAN Community in 2015. In this process of ASEAN integration, it is undeniable that AIPA being the legitimate regional grouping of the legislative arm of ASEAN, and as the legitimate representatives of the peoples of ASEAN, have a very important role to play. Indeed AIPA having a direct link to the people could act as a bridge between ASEAN and its peoples. AIPA could also assist ASEAN in the efforts at developing the sense of awareness and belonging to a community, that is the sense and feeling of ASEAN-ness.

Honorable Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

AIPA has the important responsibility in providing the perspective of parliamentarians and in voicing the concerns and interest of the peoples of the region. This important responsibility has been duly recognized in the ASEAN Charter which provides for greater engagement between ASEAN and AIPA. And it was under the provisions of the ASEAN Charter that an AIPA delegation was invited for an informal meeting with the ASEAN Heads of Government at the recently concluded 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held in Hua Hin, Thailand. The informal meeting with the ASEAN Heads of Government on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009 had indeed opened a new era of government and parliamentary partnership which is indeed crucial at a time when we are undertaking efforts at transforming our region into an ASEAN Community. It is in response to all these developments that the AIPA Caucus has been assigned the task to come up with the recommendations and budget for a more structured and more effective involvement of AIPA in ASEAN affairs.

Since this is the first meeting, the focus would necessarily be on the setting up of house such as to discuss and adopt the Terms of Reference of the AIPA Caucus and to set the guidelines on the tasks assigned to the Caucus. As I had mentioned earlier, I am confident that this first AIPA Caucus would be able to find consensus on the guidelines and in identifying the areas of the laws on combating the drug menace and human trafficking that could be harmonized. I am also convinced that the Caucus would be able to come up with the structure for the regular interaction between AIPA and ASEAN.

And I have no doubts that the AIPA Caucus which is a new landmark in AIPA cooperation would served to further strengthen the close friendship and cooperation between the Parliaments of ASEAN countries. Needless to say that while we are all mindful of our other international commitments, it is our commitment to AIPA and also to ASEAN that is more important and uppermost as we work together to ensure the continued peace, stability, progress, development and prosperity of our ASEAN region.

To all the distinguished delegates gathered here in Kuala Lumpur for the First AIPA Caucus, I am confident that you would all be having a very successful and fruitful inaugural meeting.

On that positive note, it is now my great honour to officially open the First AIPA Caucus.  
Thank you.